

Character of God

Lesson 2: Satan is Evil and Nothing but Evil

Introduction: Just as God is absolutely nothing but goodness, love, light, and merciful, Satan, as far as his character is concerned, is nothing but pure hatred, evil, dark, and merciless. Satan is the exact opposite of God in character. As the great Bible teacher, R. A. Torrey stated, “Simply put, the devil is the opposite of God. The devil is to evil what God is to good.”¹ God is certainly far greater than Satan as it pertains to power, strength and might. There are not two “deities” in the universe. Therefore, to state the truth concerning Satan and his opposition to God is not teaching dualism, but it does help us to understand that there is a source and an originator of evil in the universe that God created, and that source is not God, but Satan. This helps to resolve some of the so-called mystery of evil.

I. Satan so epitomizes evil that his power is described as “darkness” and he is given titles such as “the evil one” or “the wicked one”.

1. Satan is darkness (evil) in contrast to God who is pure light (goodness)
 - a. *To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me (Acts 26:18).*
 - b. Notice that Satan is contrasted to God concerning both of their natures. Darkness and light are contrasted by whether one’s acts are good or evil:
 - c. *And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and **men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov’d. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God (John 3:19-21).***
 - d. This is why we must explicitly accept the fact that God is not the source of the evil that is in this world. He is not the author of evil or evil acts. There is no darkness/evil in God and anyone who does evil cannot claim God as their source.
 - e. *This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth (1 John 1:5-6)*

¹ Torrey, R. A. **The Answer** (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 1999), p. 133

- f. *In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother* (1 John 3:10)
2. The reason why our world has murder, rape, sickness, lying, slandering, death, and other tragedies and why blatant sin seems to be making headway even in our political systems (abortion, homosexuality, etc.) is due to the fact that it is controlled by an evil entity:
- a. *We know that those who have been made God's children do not continue to sin. The Son of God keeps them safe. The Evil One cannot hurt them. We know that we belong to God, **but the Evil One controls the whole world.** And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding. So now we can know the one who is true, and we live in that true God. We are in his Son, Jesus Christ. He is the true God, and he is eternal life* (1 John 5:18-20; Easy to Read Version)
 - b. The world around us is being controlled by Satan and the results of his power of death are evident in the world (Heb. 2:14-15; John 8:44; 10:10):
 - c. *Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against **the wiles of the devil.** For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, **against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.** Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand* (Eph. 6:10-13)
 - d. Satan is the ruler of darkness, evil and wickedness in this world. All evil and wickedness that is around us is his doing. Jesus made it clear that the evil one is the prince, or ruler, of this world (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). Therefore, the evil that is in this world is due to its present ruler and should not be blamed on God.
3. The wicked one is an enemy of God and men:
- a. "The Hebrew word satan [שָׂטָן] means 'an adversary, one who resists.'"²
 - b. A lot of theology in the church teaches that Satan is some type of servant of God who merely does God's bidding. People do not realize how such an idea slanders

² Elwell, Walter A. "Entry for 'Satan'". "Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology". <<http://classic.studydrive.org/dic/bed/view.cgi?number=T627>>. 1897.

God. Jesus tells us that **Satan is an enemy** who is responsible for having planted the seeds of evil in this world:

- c. *Another parable He put forth to them, saying: “The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared. So the servants of the owner came and said to him, ‘Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?’ He said to them, ‘**An enemy has done this**’ (Matt. 13:24-28a; NKJV)*
- d. Notice that in this parable the evil that was done was not done by God’s permission or His desire or His command. It was done by an enemy. In His interpretation of the parable Jesus reveals exactly who this enemy is:
- e. *He answered and said to them: “He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of **the wicked one**. **The enemy who sowed them is the devil**, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness (Matt. 13:37-41; NKJV)*
- f. Notice that Jesus makes clear that Satan is the wicked one. He also makes clear that the devil is an enemy. He is not a friend and he is not serving God nor is God controlling his actions. John 8:44 says, “*When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own*”. Satan does many things on his own because he desires to oppose God.
- g. *Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you. Be sober, be vigilant; because **your adversary the devil**, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world (1 Pet. 5:7-9).*
- h. Remember this important truth: God cares about you deeply and only wants good for your life. Satan hates you deeply and wants to destroy your life. He is the cause of all trials and afflictions. We must stop blaming God for the trials and life and begin to say, “An enemy has done this.”

II. How Does Satan Work his Evil in this World?

1. Satan is working his evil in the world as he works through men and women who give him authority to do so:
 - a. *Wherein in time past ye walked according to **the course of this world**, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience (Eph. 2:2)*
 - b. In his book, “Satan and His Plan of Evil,” Keith R. Blades says, “The ‘course’ that this world is following is something that is contrary to God’s will.”³
 - c. Since God has given man the dominion over the earth (Gen. 1:26-28) Satan can only work through yielded vessels. Sadly, he has plenty of yielded vessels to work through.
 - d. *For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another, not as Cain who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother’s righteous (1 John 3:11-12; NKJV).*
 - e. Many so-called scholars dispute about the so-called absence or little mention of Satan in the Old Testament. Some even go as far as to claim that in the few references concerning Satan in the OT that he is merely acting as a servant of God. However, John reveals that Satan was actively working against God and employing evil from man's origins. It was he who worked through Cain to murder Abel, a righteous lover of God. Jesus lets us know that Satan was a murderer from the very beginning:
 - f. *Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. **He was a murderer from the beginning**, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it (John 8:44).*
 - g. Jesus points out that the reason why the Pharisees wanted to murder him was because their father, Satan, was working through them. As we can see from the story of Cain murdering Abel, Satan was present and working through him just as he desired to work through the Pharisees. While Satan may not have gotten a lot of press during Old Testament times, Jesus assures us that he was very active. Satan was ruling the world through the authority of death (Heb. 2:14-15; Rom. 5:12-14).

³ Blades, Keith R. **Satan and His Plan of Evil** (Matthews, NC: Enjoy the Bible Ministries, 1994), p. 57

2. Satan works his evil in this world through those agents of his known as “evil spirits”:

- a. *And in that same hour he cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of **evil spirits**; and unto many that were blind he gave sight. Then Jesus answering said unto them, Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached (Luke 7:21-22)*
- b. *And it came to pass afterward, that he went throughout every city and village, preaching and shewing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: and the twelve were with him, And certain women, **which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities**, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils (Luke 8:1-2)*
- c. *And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul: So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, **and the evil spirits went out of them**. Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth. And there were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, and chief of the priests, which did so. And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye? And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded (Acts 19:11-16)*
- d. These spirits are called evil because their intent is to cause sickness and destroy lives. Satan is their king and utilizes them for his own destructive purposes. God’s only relationship to evil spirits is to deliver mankind from them.

3. Evil spirits in the Old Testament:

- a. There are some troublesome passages where God is said to have personally sent an evil spirit to do His bidding. These need to be examined in order to further vindicate God from the accusation of authoring evil.
- b. *When Abimelech had reigned three years over Israel, **Then God sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the men of Shechem**; and the men of Shechem dealt treacherously with Abimelech: **That the cruelty done to the threescore and ten sons of Jerubbaal might come, and their blood be laid upon Abimelech their***

brother, which slew them; and upon the men of Shechem, which aided him in the killing of his brethren (Judges 9:22-24)

- c. The Hebrew word for “sent” in this passage is “Shalach”. About this word, J. B. Rotherham says, “...in the verb *shalach*, ‘to send.’ Notice its modification with reference to the raven and the dove in Gen. viii. 7, 8. Noah ‘sent’ them ‘forth’; that is, he simply ‘let them go.’ The only cause was *permission*, the removal of restraint. Again, when Eliezer said (Gen. xxiv. 51: ‘Send me away,’ all he meant was, ‘Let me go,’ ‘Do not hinder me.’”⁴
- d. Therefore, in the case of Abimelech God was simply allowing Satan to have his way due to the fact that Abimelech had murdered the sons of Jerubbaal. In this case the “laws of sowing and reaping” were taking effect (Gal. 6:6-8).
- e. *But the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him. And Saul's servants said unto him, Behold now, an evil spirit from God troubleth thee. Let our lord now command thy servants, which are before thee, to seek out a man, who is a cunning player on an harp: and it shall come to pass, when the evil spirit from God is upon thee, that he shall play with his hand, and thou shalt be well (1 Sam. 16:14-16; see also v.23; 18:10-12; 19:9; 28:15-18).*
- f. *Though they bring up their children, yet will I bereave them, that there shall not be a man left: yea, woe also to them when I depart from them! (Hosea 9:12)*
- g. Whenever God “departs” or “forsakes” an individual or a nation and they begin to receive the consequences of their rebellion, the Hebrews stated it in terms in which God is said to have actively brought upon the person the circumstances. In all actuality, when God departs it means that He has withdrawn His protection over the person and then Satan is given full access (Matt. 18:34; 1 Cor. 5:1-5; Eph. 4:26-27; 1 Tim. 1:20).
- h. Walter Scott: “We are told, in the same verse, that the Spirit of God departed from Saul. This must mean that the Holy Spirit withdrew his influence, and, consequently, Saul lost the gifts, the ability for government, and managing the affairs of his kingdom, which had been imparted to him, when ‘the Spirit of God came upon him, and he became another man,’ 1 Sam. x. 6. Does it not follow from this, that the tempers which he afterwards manifested, were the effects of the influence of an evil spirit, opposite to the Spirit of God? And, as it came upon him in consequence of the withdrawment of the Divine Spirit, and by the permission

⁴ Rotherham, Joseph **The Emphasized Bible**, Bradbury, Agnew & Co., ©1902, p. 919

of the Divine Being, and also as a judgment, it may, with the greatest propriety, and especially in the Hebrew idiom, *according to which God is often said to do that which he permits to be done, and renders subservient to his purposes, be represented as from God.* This is the natural interpretation of the passage, and that which best agrees with the general doctrine of the Bible respecting evil spirits.”⁵ (Emphasis are mine)

- i. F. B. Meyer: “The evil spirit is said to have come from God. In the bold language of Scripture, because He permitted it, and so constituted the laws of the human mind, that when a man gives himself up to any kind of sin, it always opens the door to Satan and to further and more desperate acts. When we refuse God’s Spirit, we surrender ourselves into the power of the devil. When men do not wish to retain God in their knowledge, He gives them up (Rom. 1:28).”⁶
- j. Walter C. Kaiser, Jr.: “All this happened by the permission of God rather than as a result of his direct will, for God cannot be the author of anything evil.”⁷
- k. Adolphus Frederick Schauffler: “In what sense was this evil spirit ‘from the Lord’ (a.) One vital fact in Saul’s case is that he was apostate from God, and therefore inevitably wretched, (b.) The next fact pertaining to the state of such a mind is that it presents a most congenial field for Satan’s agency. He loves to torment such souls, and never misses his opportunity, (c.) It only remains to say that there is need of no other agency from God than the permissive. Satan never needs to be sent on such a mission; it is only requisite that the Lord suffer him to go. — They having chosen sin and rebellion rather than obedience, and consequently evil rather than good, God leaves them to their own guilty choice, to ‘eat the fruit of their own way and to be filled with their own devices.’”⁸
- l. Ralph Fenwick: “Those that drive the good Spirit away from them do of course become a prey to the evil Spirit. If God and His grace do not rule us, sin and Satan will have possession of us. The devil, by the divine permission, troubled and terrified Saul by means of the corrupt humours of his body and passions of his mind. He grew fretful and peevish, and discontented, timorous and suspicious, 'ever and anon starting and trembling ;' he was sometimes, says Josephus, as if he had been choked or strangled, and a perfect demoniac by fits. This made him unfit

⁵ Scott, Walter **The Existence of Evil Spirits Proved: and their Agency, Particularly in Relation to the Human Race, Explained and Illustrated** (Jackson and Walford, 1843), pp. 94, 95

⁶ Meyer, F. B. **Choice Notes on Joshua-2 Kings** (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1985), pp101, 102

⁷ Kaiser Jr., Walter C. **Hard Sayings of the Bible** (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1996), p. 212

⁸ Schauffler, Adolphus Frederick **Select Notes on the International Sunday School Lessons** (W. A. Wilde Company, 1875), pp. 25-26

for business, precipitate in his counsels, the contempt of his enemies, and a burden to all about him.”⁹

III. God’s Redemption and Protection of His Own

1. The redemptive work of Christ has overcome the evil one.
 - a. We will explore the redemptive work of Christ in later lessons. However, it is necessary to share some aspect of this now lest this lesson concerning Satan’s utter evil brings fear to our hearts, which would defeat the purpose of giving these lessons. Jesus has thoroughly dealt with Satan and has redeemed God’s people from his dominion of evil:
 - b. *Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from **the power of darkness**, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins (Col. 1:12-14)*
 - c. Satan is the one who wields the power of evil (darkness). God does not need, want, or use evil. God instead delivers us from evil (Matt. 6:13; Acts 7:9-10).
 - d. There are some who ask, “Why doesn’t God do something about the evil that is in the world?” The answer is that He did. He sent Jesus. Jesus conquered Satan and his evil (more on this in later lessons).
2. Because of Christ’s redemptive work on our behalf, God’s children have His guaranteed protection from the evil one:
 - a. 1 John 5:18 tells us that when we stay free of sin then God keeps us safe. Those who do not make a lifestyle of sin are protected by God. When we were born again by the precious blood of Jesus we came into covenant union with God and now receive His protection. Almost every reference to Satan as the “evil one” gives us God’s assurance of protection if we follow His conditions:
 - b. *But the Lord is faithful. He will give you strength and protect you from the Evil One. The Lord gives us confidence that you are doing what we told you and that you will continue to do it (2 Thess. 3:3-4; Easy to Read Version).*

⁹ Fenwick, Ralph “David Playing Before Saul” in **The Primitive Methodist Magazine for the Year of Our Lord, 1880. VOL. III** (London: Ralph Fenwick, 1880), p. 585

- c. *And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one (Matt. 6:13; NKJV).*
 - d. As we stay connected to Christ, stay in God’s Word, and resist temptation and sin, we are guaranteed deliverance and safety from Satan and his evil.
3. This safety is not automatic, but we must stand on God’s Word in the midst of the warfare between good and evil:
- a. ***I have given them Your word;** and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should **keep them from the evil one.** They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth (John 17:14-17; NKJV)*
 - b. We have been given the Word of God. It is our weapon for victory over Satan.
 - c. *Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, **taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.** And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God (Eph. 6:13-17; NKJV)*
 - d. *I write to you, fathers, Because you have known Him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, Because you have overcome the wicked one. I write to you, little children, Because you have known the Father. I have written to you, fathers, Because you have known Him who is from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, Because you are strong, and **the word of God abides in you, And you have overcome the wicked one** (1 John 2:13-14; NKJV)*
 - e. ***Through faith** he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, **lest he that destroyed the firstborn** should touch them. (Heb. 11:28)*
 - f. “Here it is possible to see as the destroyer of the firstborn of Israel, not God, but some other power whom the Lord opposes and from whom He protects the Israelites.”¹⁰

¹⁰ Dunnam, Maxi D., Oglivie, Lloyd (Ed.) **The Communicator's Commentary: Exodus** , ©1987, Waco, TX: Word Books, p. 149

- g. The destroyer is not working alongside God as an agent of destruction. God is merely allowing him free access to the Egyptians due to Pharaoh's failure to comply with God's demands. Yet He opposes this destroyer to protect Israel, as He does for the child of God today when we obey and stand on His Word
- h. Moses gave God's Word to the Israelites and their obedience of it would protect them from the destroyer. The destroyer in Hebrews 11:28 is not God, but another person (Compare Exodus 12:12 with 12:23). The Psalmist would later tell us that it was "*evil angels*" (the angels that rebelled with Satan) that caused the problems for Egypt (Psalm 78:43-52).
- i. *He cast upon them the fierceness of his anger, wrath, and indignation, and trouble, by sending evil angels among them. He made a way to his anger; he spared not their soul from death, but gave their life over to the pestilence; And smote all the firstborn in Egypt; the chief of their strength in the tabernacles of Ham* (Psalm 78:49-51)
- j. Notice that he smote their firstborn by giving them over to the pestilence, or with drawing His protection. This was the pestilence brought by the evil angels that God permitted to invade Egypt due to their constant rebellion. Please note that God Pharaoh multiple chances to repent but he continued to harden his heart. When men rebel, they subject themselves to satanic evil and God is left with no other recourse but to allow them to suffer the consequences of their rebellion. Those who stay in and obey the Word of God are protected by Him.

Conclusion: While there are many who use the evil that is in the world to hate God and to live immoral lives, there are others who are sincerely seeking the truth. It is to these that Satan attempts to hide his activities so that God will continue to be blamed (2 Cor. 4:3-4). He will even use the Old Testament Scriptures to paint a negative picture of God and hide the fact that he, and not God, is behind evil. However, when we can explain the full Biblical truth to the sincere seeker and help them to grasp the understanding of a good God who hates evil and is at war against it, and demonstrate how Satan has twisted God's Word, including the Old Testament, then we will find many will come into a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ (John 5:39-40; Luke 24:25-27; Acts 8:26-38; 17:1-4, 11-12) and confused Christians will be set free and their worship of their Father will be enhanced. Always remember that God is good and nothing but good and Satan is the exact opposite: he is pure evil.